

2. **RESOLUTION OF THE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORTING TOUGHER LAWS RELATED TO INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN**

Source: San Diego County Division

Referred To: Public Safety Policy Committee

Recommendation to General Resolutions Committee:

WHEREAS, technology has brought significant changes to our society over the past two decades, many of which have had a positive effect on our quality of life while some have threatened the safety and well-being of our young children; and

WHEREAS, the internet has made victimization of children easier than ever before; and

WHEREAS, the internet has also significantly increased the availability of child pornography, with more than 6.5 million images being shared via the internet, compared to only a few hundred photos less than a generation ago; and

WHEREAS, some see viewing child pornography as a "victimless crime," however these images are never completely eradicated from the internet and the victims continue to have their horrific photos viewed over and over again by pedophiles for sexual gratification; and

WHEREAS, in 2007 the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported it had identified 9.6 million images and videos of child pornography and believed there were millions more not identified; and

WHEREAS, in the 2006 Butner Redux Study, 98 percent of convicted child pornographers had molested children before their capture; and

WHEREAS, the United States is the number one producer and consumer of child pornography in the world, with more than 624,000 child pornography users identified nationwide.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the General Assembly of the League of California Cities assembled at the Annual Conference in San Diego, September 7, 2012, that the League of California Cities:

1. Desires to increase public awareness and educate others about the critical issue of internet crimes against children statewide.
2. Requests the League advocate for the State Legislature to adopt tougher laws for child pornographers.

3. Requests the League advocate for additional and more permanent funding for Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces (ICAC) statewide.

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Background Information on Resolution No. 2

Source: San Diego County Division

Background:

Technology has brought significant changes to our society over the past two decades. While most have had a positive effect on our quality of life, many have threatened the safety and well-being of our young children.

The internet has made victimization of children much easier than ever before. Today, pedophiles can network with one another online, encourage one another to commit crimes against children, and share tips on evading law enforcement. Worse yet, they often use the internet – social media sites, in particular – to find and prey on young children. Many times, these innocent children are lured away from their homes by these perpetrators and never seen again.

The internet has also significantly increased the availability of child pornography. More than 6.5 million child abuse images are being shared via the internet today. Before this technology was in place, the number of photos available numbered in the few hundreds.

While some see viewing child pornography as a “victimless crime,” nothing could be further from the truth. One study showed that 98 percent of convicted child pornographers had molested children before being captured (Butner Redux Study, 2006).

Additionally, these images can never be completely eradicated from the internet once they are placed online. Therefore, victims continue to suffer the irrevocable damage of knowing their horrific photos are being viewed over and over again for sexual gratification by pedophiles.

Many believe these horrendous crimes happen mostly in other countries. Sadly, the United States is the number one producer and consumer of child pornography in the world, and American children are the primary victims. More than 624,000 child pornography users have been identified nationwide and thousands of these reside in San Diego County.

While the internet is exploited by these predators to harm children, it ironically is the same tool used by law enforcement to track down and arrest these criminals.

Your help is urgently needed to secure resources for this effort, increase public awareness, work to support tougher laws and educate others on this critical issue. While San Diego has one of the nation’s 61 ICAC task forces, its six trained investigators are overwhelmed with cases due to funding shortfalls.

With your help, these predators can be taken off the street and our children will be safer. Here is what needs to be done:

Change state law. The current “wobbler” (misdemeanor and felony) wording should be eliminated. All child pornography charges should be made a straight felony.

Strengthen sentencing. State sentencing on child pornography cases needs to be more in line with

federal sentencing.

Toughen discovery statutes. State discovery statutes should be amended to comply with the Adam Walsh Act. Child pornography is contraband that is easily reproduced and should be treated as such.

Change pornography evidence rules. Stop the practice of giving copies of child pornography evidence to the defense. Instead, provide the defense a secure area where they can view the evidence but not take possession of it.

Strike current law about possession/distribution of child pornography. Currently, state law allows for a defendant's conviction for possession and distribution of child pornography to be set aside if he/she has complied with all probation conditions, pursuant to Penal Code Section 1203.4.

Strengthen disclosure laws. If applying for any job other than public office, licensure by any state or local agency, or for contracting with the state lottery, a convicted possessor of child pornography does not need to disclose their prior conviction. That allows people who have been convicted of possessing or dealing in photos of child exploitation to get closer to children. PC

1203.4 already has exceptions for convictions of PC 286(c), 288, 288a(c), 2813.5, 289m, felony 261.5(d) and 42001(b) of the Vehicle Code. These convictions may not be set aside per PC 1203.4 and must always be disclosed. PC 311.1, 311.2, 311.3, 311.4, 311.10 and 311.11 should be added to the list of charges to which this type of relief does not apply.

Update reporting laws. The existing mandatory reporting law should be updated to include librarians and computer technicians.

Provide permanent funding for ICAC. Significantly more permanent funding is needed for Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces (ICAC's). They are tasked with investigating crimes against children involving electronic devices. The crimes include child pornography, child molestation and peer-to-peer bullying. ICAC task force's are severely undersized and underfunded to keep up with the magnitude of the growing problem.

Increase public awareness. Public awareness of the issue needs be heightened particularly to parents and children as well as all public officials and the community in order to protect our children against these unspeakable crimes.

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League of California Cities Staff Analysis on Resolution No. 2

Staff: Dorothy Holzem, Assoc. Legislative Representative, (916) 658-8214
Committee: Public Safety Policy Committee

Summary:

This Resolution seeks to increase public awareness of the prevalence of internet crimes against children. To help promote this goal, the Resolution requests the League of California Cities advocate for legislation that creates tougher laws for child pornographers and provides additional, more permanent funding for Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces.

Background:

According to the Resolution sponsors, the U.S. Census Bureau (2005) estimates that there are over 24.5 million internet users in the United States between the ages of 10 and 17. They cite that the rapid growth of internet accessibility has brought forth helpful tools for our children and youth. Unfortunately, it has also brought with it the increased potential for online victimization including unwanted exposure to sexual material, unwanted sexual solicitations, and online harassment.

The Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Program was created to help federal, state and local law enforcement agencies enhance their investigative responses to offenders who use the internet, online communication systems, or computer technology to sexually exploit children. The program is funded by the United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The program is a national network of 61 coordinated task forces representing over 3,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies. These agencies are engaged in proactive investigations, forensic investigations, and criminal prosecutions.

In FY 2009, ICAC Program received \$25 million under the Omnibus Appropriation Act to support ICAC task forces, training, and technical assistance. The ICAC Program received an additional \$50 million through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act to support ICAC task forces, training, technical assistance, and research. In each of the past two fiscal years, the program received \$30 million nationally.

Existing California law addresses the policy area extensively in the areas of solicitation, pornography, and harassment with additional penalties often levied when the victim is a minor less than 14 years of age. Internet-based crimes against minors have been a popular topic in recent legislative proposals especially as new web-based technology is brought into the market. Legislation has included both increased penalties and greater protections or remedies for victims.

Fiscal Impact:

Unknown. No direct fiscal impact to city general funds.

Existing League Policy:

Related to this Resolution, existing policy offers:

The League believes that the children of California must be recognized as our state's most valuable resource. Their development, education, and well-being are key to our state's future. Further, it is essential that each child have the support needed to become a productive citizen in the world of the 21st Century.

The League supports the promotion of public safety through stiffer penalties for violent offenders.

The League's Mission Statement is "to expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians."

In addition, the Strategic Priorities for 2012, as adopted by the League Board of Directors, are to:

1) Support Sustainable and Secure Public Employee Pensions and Benefits: Work in partnership with state leaders and other stakeholders to promote sustainable and secure public pensions and other post-employment benefits (OPEBs) to help ensure responsive and affordable public services for the people of our state and cities.

2) Promote Local Control for Strong Cities: Support or oppose legislation and proposed constitutional amendments based on whether they advance maximum local control by city governments over city revenues, land use, redevelopment and other private activities to advance the public health, safety and welfare of city residents.

3) Build Strong Partnerships for a Stronger Golden State: Collaborate with other public and private groups and leaders to reform the structure and governance, and promote transparency, fiscal integrity, and responsiveness of our state government and intergovernmental system.

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